DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 422 945 IR 057 103

AUTHOR Phan, Dien D.; Thoms, Karen J.
TITLE Etiquette in Telecommunications and Web Pages.
PUB DATE 1997-00-00
NOTE 5p.; In: Proceedings of the International Academy for Information Management Annual Conference (12th, Atlanta, GA, December 12-14, 1997); see IR 057 067.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom (055) -- Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Computer Mediated Communication; Computer Networks; *Design Preferences; Electronic Mail; Foreign Countries; Guidelines; Telephone Communications Systems; *World Wide Web
IDENTIFIERS Answering Machines; *Netiquette; Voice Mail; *Web Pages

ABSTRACT

This paper addresses problems and issues that arise in electronic communications, and offers guidelines and etiquette. Topics covered include: (1) drafting an electronic message, including width of messages, abbreviations and smileys, salutation, name, author address, and responding to a message; (2) "Webtiquette" (i.e., guidelines for World Wide Web page development); (3) design guidelines for voice mail and automated answering services; (4) pager emotimetric codes; and (5) problems and issues, including flames, privacy, and lead time for e-mail. (AEF)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ETIQUETTE IN TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND WEB PAGES

ED 422 945

Dien D. Phan
Lingnan University

Karen J. Thoms
St. Cloud State University

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
T. Case
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advance in telecommunications technology in the past several years has created novel ways in interpersonal communications. Today many people find that their daily communications are not limited to telephone, memorandum, and postal mail. Telecommunications tools such as e-mail, voice mail, web page, and pager messages are becoming common place. While telecommunications technologies offers more efficient and effective ways in communications, it is necessary for people to know the common etiquette and communications styles. Because these styles and etiquette were de facto standards, they vary among users and organizations.

DRAFTING THE MESSAGE

Because people who use Internet and e-mail may be exposed to hundreds of electronic messages per day, including junk mail, these electronic messages should be concise and to the point. Furthermore, one should not get caught up in excessive punctuation. Many messages contain dozens of exclamation points at the end of a sentence for added emphasis. Unlike the formal English writing style, exclamation points are just another form of ending a sentence in e-mail. However, if one or two exclamation points are adequate, additional ones may tend to offend rather than impress the reader.

Electronic messaging systems, including e-mail, are often used as substitutes for traditional letters and memos. Because the goal is to get the message out quickly, generally informal phrases are used more frequently than sentences, while grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors are typically overlooked. However, not all e-mail messages should be casual. The KISS approach might well be considered -- keep it short and simple -- with both sentence structure and paragraph development.

Width of Messages

For various reasons, e-mail messages may become too large on the viewer's display. This is because some e-mail software do not have the ability to wrap a long line and display them in multiple lines on the screen. Therefore, it is the sender's responsibility to make sure the message fits the viewers' screens.

Abbreviations and Smileys

The range of expression and emotion is possible when electronic mail is used and chat is limited, but the Internet is far from being boring and mundane. Emoticons, abbreviations, and smileys (also called "smilies") bring life and nonverbal communication to the Internet (Eddings, 1994). Abbreviations are frequently used with e-mail to save keystrokes and on-line access time. Messages can also be imbedded with visual and auditory cues called smilies or emoticons. They

IR057103

are simple strings of characters that are interspersed in the text to perform non-verbal communications.

Salutation, name, and author address

In an Internet message, the salutation does not have to be formal. People can start the message with "Dear Mr. Smith", "Dear John", or just simply "John:". Some people will suggest the tone of the communication or the familiarity with the receiver will dictate the degree of formality.

Similar to formal letter style, an electronic message ends with closure such as sincerely, regards, etc. and your name, all but the signature. It is common for people to add their e-mail address, Web page location (URL), telephone numbers, and/or home address to the bottom of the message. Some people go further to add a business logo drawn by keyboard characters and/or a favorite quote.

Responding to a message

Because an authenticated electronic mail is a legal document, it should be treated at the same level as a hard copy letter. In organizations, which implemented Total Quality Management (TQM) programs, employees must respond to an e-mail inquiry within 24 hours. As a rule of thumb, people should respond to all e-mail inquiries as soon as they can. In case time is needed to study the question for a proper response, an acknowledgment and a promised date for a response is sufficient. This is to let the sender know that his/her message is not lost and give him/her an idea of when to expect a response. In all instances, it is polite to respond to all electronic inquiries. It is also helpful to keep the same thread by using the same *Subject* line and to cite parts of the original message in response to the e-mail.

WEBTIQUETTE

Because the number of guidelines and etiquette for web pages are still growing with the advance of technology used in web page development, common guidelines in addition to those of the current graphical user interface (GUI) are:

1. Use proper colors for foreground lettering and background. As a rule of thumb, dark text on light background provides the best readability contrast.
2. Keep Graphics within default window width.
3. Minimize time to download web page by reducing graphics, animation, and audio played in your web page.
4. Give credits for all intellectual works such as graphics, code, citation used in your web page.
5. Give alternative choices for features that may not be viewed by viewers who don't have the same browsers or tools to view the intended features.
6. Include your E-mail address to facilitate communications.
7. Make access and web search user-friendly by using meaningful domain name and don't forget to put the title on your web page.
8. Be creative and unique in your web page.

VOICE MAIL

Currently, most people follow the sample greetings suggested by the manufacturer in the user manual for their personal answering service and these are the defacto etiquette in personal voice mail. With the advance in telecommunications technology, the use of automated answering services for customer services and business transactions are common place. However, lack of user interface design standards in this area has caused numerous problems for telephone users. In order to improve voice mail design, the following design guidelines are suggested:

1. Use short and simple greetings to greet customers. The voice must be clear.
2. Always allow users to talk to a real human operator if they want to do so. This is to allow users who do not have touch tone telephone or who could not understand how to use the options to complete their message.
3. Allow the user to exit to the previous menu or main menu and to correct entry errors without terminating the telephone connection. Too often voice mail menus lead users to a dead end or prematurely terminate the connection after a transaction is

performed or an error is made. For users who want to try another option, exit to a previous menu or main menu is always helpful and thus reduces the number of repeated calls.

4. Allow users to say a number as an alternative to press a touch tone button to select options.
5. Put the most commonly used options as the earliest options in the menu system. The 80/20 rule applies here: 80% of the customers use a few common options. They should not be subjected to a long list of menus before reaching the desired option.
6. Allow data gathered by the answering service to be transferred to other voice mail systems or human operators. Too often, after customers give account numbers and other data to the automated system, the system then transfers them to the new system or human operator who asks for the same information again.

PAGER EMOTIMERIC CODES

According to Motorola, currently there are about 39 million pagers in use in the U.S. (Hierlmaier, 1997). In comparison with other high tech communication gadgets such as cellular phones, the major drawback for current pagers is that there is not much information that can be displayed on a pager screen except for a group of numbers. The receiver must use a telephone to communicate to the caller, and the geographic area in which the pager can receive the signal is still limited. While new pagers that can display text are coming on the market, current numeric-only pager holders have some ability to communicate through pagers by using common emotimeric codes available.

Currently the screens of pagers can display more than just phone numbers. Similar to existing emoticons and abbreviations used in e-mail, pager emotimeric codes are developed and have become well accepted in pager communications as a way to extend the capability of the pager (see Table 1).

TABLE 1

EMOTIMERIC CODES

Codes	*Meanings*
0001000	I am feeling alone now
020202	Just thinking of you
080808	Kisses and Hugs
10-2-1	It is possible, there's a chance
10000001	I miss you
13	I am having a bad day
18	I ate
10	You are perfect
101	Easy task, I can do it
747	Let's fly
411	I need more information
911	I desperately need help
2468	You are terrific
90210	I am feeling kind of witchy

Adopted from Hierlmaier (1997).

PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

Flames

Cruising on a busy information highway is not much different from cruising on a busy interstate highway because collisions frequently occur. Most serious collisions of individuals and groups were caused by flames, the action that causes irritation or anger from readers. It's basically an electronic attack message.

Sometimes the reason for a flame is quite obvious, but in other cases it is just a case of misunderstanding. An innocent sentence in an article posted on a newsgroup may be misinterpreted by thousands of other readers and may generate flames.

Privacy

Unlike postal mail, e-mail and newsgroups provide neither privacy nor security. E-mail can be likened to a postcard -- anyone can read it.

E-mail privacy within a company is not covered by U.S. Federal law. The Electronic Communications Privacy Act of 1986 only prohibits inception or disclosure of e-mail messages by parties outside the company. In the case of Alana Shoars vs Epson America Inc., the judge dismissed the lawsuit charging of e-mail piracy against Epson because e-mail does not fall within the state wiretapping laws (Wagner, 1996; Information Week, 1994; Bjerklie, 1993).

Lead time

While e-mail allows messages to reach destinations at lightning speed, it is necessary to allow lead-time for the receivers to read your e-mail. This is because many people do not read their e-mail frequently. Because many organizations today require their employees to reply to e-mail within 24 hours, the rule of thumb is to allow readers at least one day to read your e-mail messages.

CONCLUSIONS

With the advance of telecommunications services, electronic messages will become the dominant means of communications for Americans in the year 2000 and beyond. However, the popularity of electronic messages that provided added benefits to all of us also came with chaos and abuses. Knowing the necessary etiquette and design styles in the electronic world will help us to communicate effectively and efficiently with the rest of the world while avoiding conflicts with others.

REFERENCES

Bjerklie, David, "E-mail: The boss is watching", *Technology Review*, April 1993.

Eddings, Joshua, *How the Internet Works*, Emeryville, CA: Ziff-Davis Press, 1994.

Hierlmaier, Christine, "20 million messages: Call Home", *St. Cloud Times, Techcetera*, March 24, 1997, p. 5B.

Heslop, Brent, and Angell, David, *The Instant Internet Tour Guide*, NY: Addison-Wesley, 1996.

Information Week, "Does E-mail mean everyone's mail?", *Information Week*, Jan 3, 1994.

Krol, Ed, *The Whole Internet: User's Guide & Catalog*, Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly & Associates, Inc., 1992.

Wagner, Mitch, "Firms spell out Appropriate use of Internet for employees", *Computerworld*, Feb. 5, 1996.